DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 248 907 JC 840 402

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TITLE Minority Report to the Special Committee on Community Colleges.
INSTITUTION California State Legislature, Sacramento. Assembly.
PUB DATE 12 Jan 84
NOTE 24p.; Attachment C, "Rx for Community Colleges" (San Jose Mercury, January 4, 1982), not available due to copyright restrictions. For a related document, see JC 840 401.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Access to Education; *Community Colleges; *Educational Quality; State Legislation; *Statewide Planning; Student Financial Aid; *Tuition; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *California

ABSTRACT

This minority report focuses on the issues of academic quality and student fees in California's community colleges. After a discussion of the relationship between fees and larger community college issues (e.g., mission, state and local control, equity, and efficiency), the question of academic quality is posed as the major issue in higher education. This discussion highlights the increase in state spending on community college education in the last 10 years; examines the decline in academic quality and the decrease in the rate of transfer to four-year institutions; and presents proposals designed to improve the academic quality of community college education. Next, the report presents the major principles of the 1983 Assembly Republican fee proposal and outlines arguments in support of the proposal in the areas of equity and efficiency. These arguments suggest that those who can afford and can benefit from a college education should pay a portion of the costs of that education; because of adequate financial aid, the proposal would not have an adverse impact on educational access; and fee revenues could be used to improve the quality of the state's community colleges. The report concludes by presenting and responding to arguments against the imposition of fees. (HB)

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MINORITY REPORT TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY COLLEGES

JANUARY 1984

JC 840 402

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January 12, 1984

TO: Members of the Legislature

SUBJECT: Minority Report to the Special Committee on Community Colleges

We are forwarding to you our comments regarding the January 1984 dated "Report of the Special Committee on Community Colleges".

In my opinion, the issue of fees to be charged at community colleges, while currently major in political appearance, is a relatively minor matter when viewed in terms of the long run reform needs of community colleges.

Clearly the overwhelming need to improve academic quality was glossed over in the majority report. Therefore, we have detailed some facets of that issue for your consideration.

Not all minority members of the Committee or of the Republican Caucus agree with all of our comments and recommendations; however, based on extensive and detailed surveys I have conducted in our Caucus, the overwhelming majority of our members support all elements of our Minority Report. Therefore, I recommend it for your review.

Sincerely,

ERNEST L. KONNYU
Lead Republican
Assembly Special Committee
on Community Colleges

ELK:bt
Enclosure

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Republican members of the Special Assembly Committee on Community Colleges want to express their appreciation to Stephen Rhoads and Joan Kitchens who assisted in preparing this report.

We would also like to thank the staff at the Assembly Reproduction Center for their help. Their staff always does a meritorious job of serving the Assembly.

INTRODUCTION

Assemblyman Campbell has asked us to provide a minority staff report to the Assembly Special Committee on Community Colleges. We want to take this opportunity to commend the Assemblyman for his efforts as Chairman of that committee.

We want to state at the onset that we do not think it is possible nor appropriate to consider the mandatory community college fee issue as a separate issue. It is inseparable from the larger issue of how the Legislature should deal with community colleges in general. Such issues as: the role and mission of the community colleges, academic quality, state and local control, efficiency and equity concerns, are all intricately connected to how and at what level community colleges are to be funded. Wherever taxpayer dollars are involved, it is legitimate and reasonable to inquire about the nature and distribution of the benefits produced. This current crisis has forced us to engage in that type of inquiry.

This report will focus on the issues of Academic Quality and Student Fees.

I. ACADEMIC QUALITY

The major higher education issue confronting us is not student fees or the restoration of the 1982-83 base, but it is the academic rigor of our community college system. Unfortunately, nowhere in the 136 pages of majority report is there reference to this issue.

During the last ten years, community colleges have grown dramatically. While in 1972-73, total general state and local revenue was $690 million, now in 1982-83 it is $1.4 billion. an increase of 105%. State aid was $290 million in 1972-73, now it is over $1 billion and, accounts for over 70% of general revenue. Unfortunately, the current community college ADA funding mechanism emphasizes quantity at the expense of quality. Colleges are rewarded in terms of their funding on the basis of how many students they can attract, not on the quality of their academic programs and their performance.

According to a rather thought provoking paper by Georges Gerard, President of the Solano Community College Faculty Senate, academic rigor will be the major topic in education for the next decade.

> "In truth, many so-called college level courses are barely at the 10th grade level, for a great number of college instructors avoid the "comprehensive" exams, never demand essay-type exams, do not enforce expository skills, logical and sequential thought

process, avoid the use of college level vocabulary by using simplified, specially edited manuals which bring the vocabulary to the level of the average 10th grade student...

It is obvious that the lack of standards has become prevalent. College courses are, in fact, brought to the level of the students rather than the students to the expected level of the courses. The "sham" is particularly evident among predominantly minority-attended classes, classes where the very underprivileged students in terms of education have the greatest need of excellence in order to compete effectively with the privileged ones. The lack of rigorous standards of excellence in the case of minorities effectively implements segregation as the students have the illusion of having been brought up to a fair level of competition when, instead, they are effectively maintained at a sub-level education via an ill-interpreted leniency."

In 1980-81 community colleges spent $66.3 million for remediation. Over 70% of the entering community college freshmen were at the 10th grade level and 15% were at the 6th grade level. It is no wonder that community colleges are finding it extremely difficult to maintain high levels of academic standards.

We can take great pride in our open access policy and in our attempts to address valid concerns such as social mobility and equality, but we must make sure we are providing our students with the necessary skills for today's world. John Gardner has called it a sin to allow any student to "drift through college without effort, without growth, and without goal."

One possible indicator of the decline of academic quality or lack of standards has been a decrease in the number of transfers from community colleges to four year institutions. At their inception, community colleges were initiated to provide a low cost alternative to the first two years of university courses. Under the master plan, community colleges were intended to be the initial entry point into higher education for two-thirds of our high school graduates, yet the number of community college students who have transferred to four year institutions has declined. In 1972, 41,794 students transferred to the fall terms at the University of California and California State University. In 1982, the number of transfers declined by 16% to 34,961. Currently, less than 10% of community college students transfer to four year institutions. In the fall of 1979, thirty-nine of the seventy community college districts had fewer than fifty students transferring to the University of California. Moreover, a 1979 report prepared by the California State University system

revealed that less than one in three of the community college students who had transferred to the State University had graduated from the campus after three years on campus and only 34 percent from any campus in the system. In a 1980 report from a University of California Task Force on retention and transfer, it was concluded that, "If we continue on the present downward spiral, many community colleges will not articulate with the University of California, because they will not be able to afford...(the) breadth and quality of programs that will prepare students for the University of California.:

The most disturbing testimony received by the Special Committee came from representatives of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) and Public Advocates. They pointed out that more than 80% of all minority students who attend postsecondary institutions in California begin at the community colleges. For many, the community college open door policy is simply a revolving door. How many students who state that their ultimate goal is to earn a bachelor degree actually do so? To quote from their testimony:

> "In 1982, for the entire state, only 175 Blacks and 389 Chicanos transferred from the community colleges to the University of California. Even more disturbing is that many of the community colleges with the highest concentration of minority students are the ones with the lowest number of transfers. For example, only five Blacks transferred to the University of California from Compton College where 89% of the first-time freshmen in 1981 were Black. Similarly, only five Chicanos transferred to the University from Imperial Valley College where 65% of its freshmen were Chicanos. At Los Angeles Southwest Community College, only four students from a freshman group of 810 transferred to U.C. Likewise, at Fresno Community College, fourteen students from a student body of 2,119 transferred to the University. Of these fourteen individuals who were able to transfer, one was Black and two were Chicano."

Part of the remedy proposed by the advocates from MALDEF and Public Advocates was an improvement in the counselling service at the community colleges. The subject of student counselling programs was discussed in the majority staff report. Specifically, the report's recommendation was to "establish a new student matriculation fund to cover costs associated with assessment and counselling programs phasing in funding for approved campus matriculation systems over a five year period."

Student matriculation has been used to describe a guidance process which brings a student into an agreement with the college for purposes of achieving the student's education objective.* Our only comments on the recommendation is to question why we need a five year phase-in period and why we need to create a special fund. One of the arguments for the establishment of a mandatory community college fee is that the revenue from the fee could be used by community college districts for such worthy programs.

The establishment of a statewide matriculation system is a step in the direction of improving the academic quality of our community colleges. We would propose for action the following additional reforms:

1. The demonstration of achievement of specific high-school-level skills should be required before a student can take college-level courses. This reform was presented in a recent article by Mary C. Pattenson-Griffith, Director of Research for the Coordinating Board of the Texas College and University. Attachment A contains a copy of that article. It is important to emphasize that she is "not suggesting slamming the open door or limiting access," she is only "suggesting that access to college does not imply open access to courses, that students can be admitted to development programs but be required to demonstrate specific competencies before being admitted to college-level classes." She regrets that this will result in the encroachment of the state on institutional autonomy, but she fears that the problem cannot or will not be addressed otherwise.

2. Probation - Those students who are not maintaining a 'C' average or who are not progressing in development programs should be placed on probation. They should be restricted in terms of the units they are allowed to attempt, and, if in their second semester of probation they have not shown improvement, they should be asked to leave the institution for a minimum of one semester.

3. Mandatory Term Papers - When applicable, college level courses should include term papers paralleling freshman/sophomore term papers in the U.C. and C.S.U.

* It should be noted that Alfred P. Fernandez, Chancellor of the Ventura County Community College District, presented an excellent case to the Special Committee on why we need a statewide system of student matriculation.

4. Vocational Education - Before entering a vocational education program, a student should be informed on how many students were successful in completing that program and how many were successful in finding jobs. Classes should be initiated or expanded where regional skills shortages exists and other classes should be deleted when job openings are too few.

5. Regional Vocational Course Coordination - State support should be eliminated for duplicate programs that should not be offered by every college, or for programs that are also offered by local school districts, or for vocational educational programs that are not successful in landing their graduates jobs. For example, Richard Moore, Superintendent of Santa Monica College, has stated that his college and neighboring West Los Angeles College do not need to offer the same Registered Nursing Program. In the interest of state taxpayers, who are paying 70% of both programs, someone needs to be given the authority to eliminate one of the programs.

6. Faculty Education - The probationary period should be increased from one to five years. The faculty senate at each college should be charged with evaluating tenured faculty members and should be responsible for maintaining quality. The faculty senate should be allowed to discipline and dismiss tenured faculty. Salary variances should be allowed in disciplines where significant shortages of teachers exist.

7 Increasing Executive Accountability - Greater powers should be given to college executives to achieve the responsibilities placed upon them by society.

8. Student Study Demands and Performance Demands - Should be increased.

Conclusions on Academic Quality

Clearly, the above stated comments and recommendations sound radical to some and, as to the recommendations, vital to others. We believe that, co-joined with the Majority Report, the conditions noted are a sound basis for reform. No less a major newspaper than the San Jose Mercury-News, back in January 4, 1982, issued a major editorial calling for many of the same reforms in our community colleges (that editorial is shown under Attachment C). It's time that the Legislature acted to create a much improved academic quality in our community colleges.

II. STUDENT FEE ISSUE

The following are the main principles of the 1983 Assembly Republican fee proposal as contained in AB 207 (Konnyu) and AB 470 (Konnyu).

* Financial assistance for all needy full-time and part-time students - According to the Chancellor's office, 37% of the full-time students receive some form of financial assistance. For most of these students the imposition of a mandatory fee will result in a corresponding increase in federal assistance. Our bills provided an additional $8 million which would primarily be used for needy part-time students.

* Districts would be allowed to keep the fee revenue - Our fee proposal was expected to increase 1983-84 community college revenues by $50 million, which is equivalent to a 3.4% cost-of-living increase. The money could have been used for such purposes as: program improvement, increasing salaries, reducing class size or improving student services.

* Low level of fees - The mandatory fees for each semester was $50 for students taking 6 or more units, and $5 per unit for those taking less than 6 units. Under this proposal, students would pay for approximately 5% of the cost of their education. An additional commitment was made not to increase the fee level for the next 3 years.

Unfortunately, the above fee proposal was unacceptable to most Assembly Democrats.

The following are some of the arguments that persuaded the Assembly Republicans to unanimously support such a fee proposal:

Equity Arguments

1. Those who can afford a college education should pay at least a portion of the cost. A no-fee policy provides an unnecessary subsidy for the rich. The private benefits of higher education are sufficient to prompt students from high income families to enroll even if they must pay the full cost of education. Why the majority party insists on taxing all the citizens of this state in order to provide a subsidy for the rich is beyond our comprehension. And it is obvious that the rich seem to be taking advantage of the free ride. According to testimony from Patrick Callen, Director of the California Post Secondary Education Commission (CPEC), 23.4% of the students attending community college had student income - not parents' income - in excess of $32,000. CPEC also presented data to staff showing that 13.7% of the

full-time student came from families with earnings in excess of $48,000. Majority staff have been extremely critical of these findings.* However, they are not a surprise to us. In a recent book, Financing Community Colleges, published by the Brookings Institution, (a summary is included as Attachment B), the authors David Breneman and Susan Nelson* state "Community College students are on the average from less wealthy families, but the difference is not as great as it is often portrayed." An education specialist from our own legislative analyst's office was quoted as saying: "The common wisdom is that community colleges serve the poor and the downtrodden but the reality is that the system subsidizes the middle class." Gerald Hayward, Chancellor of the California Community Colleges, presented testimony revealing that almost half of all adults in California have attended at least one class in a community college. In those households which have a high school junior or senior at home, 41% of those students plan to attend a community college within the next two years. Is it necessary to provide all of them with a subsidy? Do we have to subsidize the rich? Why shouldn't they pay at least 5% of the cost of their schooling? As several educators have said: there are very good reasons for providing financial aid for poor students, but upper middle-class students - the ones who own all the cars you see surrounding campuses - can afford to and should pay at least part of the freight.

2. Those who benefit from a college education should pay at least a portion of the cost - Several people at the hearings testified against mandatory fees on the basis that today's students are tomorrow's taxpayers. They argued that over a long enough time span, public higher education pays for itself, through an endless chain of students - turned - taxpayers. Dennis Doyle, Director of the Education Policy Studies Program at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, and Terry Hartle, Research Scientist at the Education Policy Research Institute of the Educational

* The majority staff report recommends that if staff from Student Aid Commission, Chancellor's Office, and the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) cannot reach agreement on the interpretation of this data, then "an outside advisory panel of five statisticians be convened by the Legislature to determine whether the methodology used to collect, to adjust, and to analyze the data is reasonable." We would recommend instead that we take a hard look at the budgets and functions of the Student Aid Commission ($4.7 million), Chancellor's Office ($4.3 million), and CPEC ($2.4 million) during our next budget deliberations.

Testing Service, believe that this logic is not very compelling: "Taxpayers who never use public higher education get no direct benefit while subsidizing those who do. Insofar as those who use it earn more money later, they are doubly well off, smarter and richer. The higher taxes they pay are more than made up for by the higher incomes they enjoy." Those who benefit should pay.

3. Because of adequate financial aid, imposing a fee on community college students will not have a significant adverse impact on access - Breneman and Nelson in their book raised the following hard question: "Does the stress on low (or no) tuition, a central tenet in the community college philosophy, still make sense in light of the billions of dollars of financial aid now going directly to needy students from federal, state and private sectors?" As an example of their concern they provided the following interesting example:

> "The substantial expansion of the basic grant program in 1978 through the enactment of the Middle Income Student Assistance Act (MISAA) provided a unique opportunity for states to adopt this approach toward more equitable access with little fear that low-income students would be worse off. MISAA raised the income limits for eligibility for a basic grant from approximately $15,000 in 1978-79 to $25,000 in 1979-80 and increased the awards for many students with incomes below $15,000. California represents an extreme example of how a tuition increase (in this case, the imposition of tuition) coupled with MISAA might have contributed to more equitable access for low-income students relative to higher-income students. If a tuition of $250 had been imposed at the community colleges in 1979-80, full-time students with need comparable to that of a family of four with income between $12,000 and $24,000 per year would have found that with their basic grants, less the $250 tuition fee, they would have had to spend less of their own money than in the previous year, when no tuition was charged (see Table 3-6). The revenues generated by tuition payments from these low- to middle-income students (paid out of their newly increased basic grants) could easily have been used to offset the increased cost of attendance for very low income students whose higher basic grants would not cover the newly imposed tuition.
>
> The result would be that for all students with needs comparable to those of families of four with incomes below $24,000, costs of attendance in 1979-80 would have been no higher - and possibly lower - than

> they were in 1978-79, even though tuition of $250 was charged. Although non-financing barriers might have prevented some of these students from attending anyway, some of the money from tuition paid by higher-income students could fund efforts to overcome these barriers. Certainly enrollment would be expected to drop among students for whom the costs of attendance did rise. But if budget constraints - such as those imposed by Proposition 13 - require reduced subsidies for community colleges, MISAA could go a long way to ensure that low-income students do not suffer from higher costs of attendance. Tuition could not justifiably be opposed on equity grounds."

In 1976-77, financial assistance to community college students totaled $109 million, in 1982-83 it had increased to $183 million. Minority staff has requested from CPEC, the Student Aid Commission, and the Chancellor's Office, information on student aid by income class. Unfortunately, that data has not been received. However, we do know that approximately 37% of the full-time students do receive some form of financial assistance. The Student Aid Commission estimates the average aid package at $2,475 per year - $1,326 grant, $615 work aid, and $534 in loans. The majority staff reports recommends increasing to that average aid package by $765 to $3,240. We would assume this would be accomplished by increasing the average grant level to $2,091 per year. We would question that recommendation especially because it is to be done prior to any discussion of fees and the cost would be $88 million.

There appears to be enough student aid to adequately help needy students obtain a higher education. Again, it should be pointed out, AB 207 (Konnyu) and AB 470 (Konnyu), provided an additional $8 million for needy students. The community colleges could earmark a portion of the fee revenue for genuinely poor students. Mandatory fees should never be a barrier to enrollment.

We feel that the above equity arguments present a rather compelling case for mandatory fees. Breneman and Nelson also arrived at a similar conclusion:

> "The main conclusion from this analysis is an ironic one. Low tuition - often considered community colleges' most important contribution to equity in higher education - is actually quite vulnerable on equity grounds. Informational and procedural barriers undoubtedly do deter some low-income students from enrolling and should not be ignored if a higher tuition/higher aid strategy is adopted. We believe that

equity should not be used to justify universal low tuition, however. The revenues generated from higher tuitions could be used to offset these nonfinancial barriers, to lower the net price for low-income students, and to reduce or even eliminate the positive correlation between family income and the probability of attending college. Indeed, our analysis suggests that a higher tuition/higher aid strategy, the pricing policy traditionally supported by economists on efficiency grounds, can also provide more equitable opportunities."

Efficiency Arguments

4. A mandatory fee will eliminate those students who are not serious about attending school - A large number of students sign up for courses and then withdraw before the end of the term. For example, CPEC did a study where 35% of the total sample of over 34,000 students attended only one semester of the three year study period and nearly one-half of that group withdrew during the term with no courses completed. Because of this concern, we now require (a concession granted to us by the Democrats) a drop fee of $10, not to exceed $20 for students who dropped courses after the first two weeks of the semester. Hopefully, this will help solve the problem. However, a mandatory fee of $5 per credit or $50 per semester is a better solution. According to one student: "If a person wants an education, he or she can find that $50. The cost will help get rid of those who aren't serious about school. Students must do their part.

5. Over-investment in education - According to the Legislative Analyst:

> "A no fee policy encourages over-investment in education. While education is desirable from both an individual's and society's standpoint, it is possible for there to be "too much" demand for education (just as there can be "too much" use of medical services or over-consumption of housing). A modest fee would require prospective students to weigh more carefully the benefits they expect to receive from an educational program against the cost of supporting this program. Given the limits on state-funded enrollments that have been necessitated by fiscal constraints, imposing a fee would discourage those students who value education the least from, in effect, denying opportunities to those who place a higher value on education (and are willing to pay a fee). This conclusion was supported by a study on

> community college finance conducted by the prestigious Brookings Institution, which concluded, "it is doubtful that public benefits alone would justify subsidy if students saw so little private gain from higher education that they were unwilling to pay any fees, even if financially able to do so."

Over 75% of the community college enrollment is part-time students and almost 50% of those students take 6 units or less. There are probably some marginal courses which a student might decide against taking because of the fee, even though a $5 fee per unit is a small sacrifice.

6. A mandatory fee is a symbol of the importance of a community college education - As a recent editorial in the Sacramento Bee states: "Even if the colleges didn't need the money, a modest fee would therefore be desirable - if only as a symbol that what they offer is worth more than just the gas to get there." Fees will also make students think more seriously about their lifetime goals. They will have to think about how they are going to use their money - on luxuries or on personal development. If students have to pay, they are going to look at the quality of the educational services provided. They will demand more for their money.

7. Fee revenues could be used to improve the quality of California community colleges - The fee revenue could be used for the following purposes:

   - scholarships for the genuinely poor students
   - remedial work in basic skills for those students with the motivation but inadequate preparation.
   - teacher salary increase
   - reduce class size
   - supplies and equipment

   The appropriate amount of tuition is a key issue. Up to a point the more that is charged, the more that will be available to improve programs. We can envision students demanding increases in fees if they know that the fee revenue would improve the programs available to them.

Arguments Against Fees and Our Replies

The following are the arguments stated in the majority report for a no-fee proposal.

a. "A small tuition today can threaten to be a substantial charge in the future. As a case in point, charges for students at the University of California have increased 89%

and for students at the California State University 245% since the passage of Proposition 13."

Comment: We have already made a commitment not to increase fees for the next three years. Currently, the California State University fees represent about 16.8% of the General Fund support. The University of California fees represent about 14.5% of General Fund support, which is about the same level as in 1973-74. It is true that after Proposition 13, the percentages have increased; but prior to Proposition 13 they were declining.

b. Society derives significant benefits from postsecondary education. These benefits take the form of a better informed electorate, a population better able to support itself, etc."

Comment: Agreed. Under the Assembly Republican fee proposal, the state would still provide a 95% to 100% subsidy for community college courses. The important question is should we be providing an equal subsidy to all students regardless of wealth.

c. As stated in a report by the prestigious Carnegie Commission on Higher Education:

> "Public institutions - and especially the community colleges - should maintain a relatively low-tuition policy (net of financial aid) for the first two years of higher education."

This is because <u>significant</u> increases in private benefits to students do not generally accrue until the third year of study.

Comment: We are proposing a low level of fees.

d. "Even if financial aid is available to these students, information barriers could inhibit their participation in the community colleges. Specifically, if insufficient resources are available to provide student services and student outreach programs, districts could experience great difficulty in advising disadvantaged students of the educational opportunities the college could provide. As a result, many students may be aware that there is a tuition, but may not even be aware that they can come to the door to apply for financial aid."

Comment: What a slap at our students! Does the majority think that they are that inept? We are shocked at the majority's low opinion of community college students.

e. "The fact that California is the only state that does not have a no-tuition policy is nothing to be ashamed of. In fact, it might be something the state should be proud of."

Comment: The majority report has pointed out that for 1982-83 the average fee for community college districts was $49 per ADA. Every state, including California, has fees being charged at the community college level. Where we differ from other states is that we do not have a statewide mandatory fee.

f. "It is not clear that the administrative costs of collecting student charges merit tuition. Although we were unable to find any data on fee collection costs in California, a study on the City University of New York found that it cost the system $1.20 to collect $1.00 in tuition revenues. Consequently, if individuals are concerned with minimizing the cost of government, it would appear that tuition would be an inefficient enterprise for community colleges to undertake."

Comments: The imposition of a statewide mandatory fee is primarily an equity issue. We do want to minimize the cost of collecting the fee. We want the community colleges to use the fee revenue to improve their education program; we do not want the fee revenue to be used to offset state cost.

Conclusion on Fees

The following letter from Louise Mishler, a concerned citizen, to the editor of the Sacramento Union, best sums up our feelings about fees:

"It's time young people realize their advantage of living in the Sacramento area. Students are able to live at home and attend college. In many areas of our country, young people are unable to attend college because of the cost of room and board. Sometimes it is over $3,000 a year.

As a divorcee, I worked two jobs as a janitor and raised two children while I attended AR College for five semesters to get my A.A. degree. It was necessary for me to have a list of priorities to be able to have an education. I enjoyed it and was glad to sacrifice clothes and entertainment.

It should also be realized that higher education is not necessary for everyone to make a good living. It also makes me very angry at people when they feel the

government should provide for anything we cannot afford or are too lazy to work for ourselves.

If we fail to have the ambition to work for $50 to go to school, then perhaps the person doesn't want it bad enough. During my term at AR College, there were a lot of full-time students going nowhere.

There really are no limits for anyone if we work hard toward goals that fit us as individuals."

Doc:commcoll/jk

Insuring Academic Quality: Regrettably, It's Time for the State to Step In

IS THERE ANYONE who is still unaware that our educational system is in shambles? The various reports that have been released recently only reiterate the message most of us have been hearing for years. Educators have long been aware that the basic-skill proficiencies of students are declining--but then so has everyone else. People have been talking about the sorry state of our schools for some time, and those of us in higher education are not exempted from the criticism.

I'm now hearing it said that college graduates can't read or write well, either, and it seems that the ones who become teachers are among the very worst of the lot. Have you heard of any encouraging results of teacher-testing programs lately? I've read reports of some where half the teaching force failed to pass basic competency tests, even with rampant cheating. Surely it is time for a general re-examination of the policy decisions that have resulted in the decline in the quality, and prestige of our educational system.

Part of the problem is that as colleges have expanded access to education in an effort to address valid concerns about equality and social mobility, they have adopted policies that have failed to maintain levels of student achievement and program quality.

It cannot be denied that those policies have resulted in increased numbers of people attending college. The proportion of the population graduating from high school and entering college has risen dramatically, from about 12 per cent in the 1950's to about 38 per cent today. However, the price of the increase has been lowered standards and reduced requirements. The result is a decrease in the value of the degree (jobs once requiring a high-school diploma now require a bachelor's degree) with a consequent decrease in the degreeholder's power to achieve social mobility.

If success in education is defined by the percentage of the population participating in organized learning, then success has been achieved. However, if it is defined in terms of student achievement as measured by standardized tests, the results are dismal.

Improving access to college has not increased the number of people attaining the level of education traditionally expected of college graduates, nor has it improved life chances for those who stumble through without such achievement. When a person receives a degree without acquiring the discipline and skills that the degree represents, the lack soon becomes self-evident and doors of opportunity are closed to him or her, and the degree itself is rendered meaningless.

What is the solution? Should we simply raise college admission standards and ignore the vast numbers of people who don't measure up? Is it impossible to achieve extended access while still maintaining quality programs?

I do not believe it is consistent with social and economic stability to exclude large segments of the population from access to higher education. Yet neither do I believe that it benefits people who cannot meet traditional standards to admit them to college and award them degrees without demanding meaningful levels of performance.

John Gardner called it a sin to allow any student to "drift through college without effort, without growth, and without goal." But the pattern of drifting is now well entrenched. People say they want to be educated but they also seem to want easier courses, no tests, no F's, no out-of-class work, and undemanding teachers.

Institutions with open access have found it practically impossible to attain traditional objectives with severely underprepared students. Consequently, the emphasis has shifted from demanding achievement to improving students' self-concept. I recognize that students' attitudes affect the outcome of their education, and that those who cannot cope with traditional demands need assistance. However, healthy attitudes cannot be substituted for learning. If higher education is to remain an avenue to social mobility, we cannot relax the demand for the ultimate attainment of specific academic skills, even by the academically underprepared.

Most open-access institutions, as well as many selective ones, have developmental programs to help underprepared students gain the skills necessary for success in college-level courses. The problem is that such students tend not to take advantage of these programs when the choice is left up to them. Many educators argue that the preparatory courses should award credit toward a degree, as an incentive to encourage enrollment and as appropriate compensation for students who complete the work.

However, awarding degree credit for remedial work reduces the number of college-level courses required for graduation and thereby lowers exit standards and the value of the degree. It would make as much sense to award college credit to high-school students who have successfully completed tenth-grade math or English.

There are educators who feel that through the use of proper methodology in regular college-level courses, students can overcome severe skill deficiencies and attain college-level goals at the same time. But the quality of the college course must be called into question if, for example, a person with eight-grade reading skills can successfully complete freshman English. It is well documented that learning is a function of the time spent on

the task. It is therefore inescapable that time spent in a college class on building the skills necessary to do the work must represent time removed from the task of accomplishing college-level work.

Consequently, I believe that we must demand the demonstration of achievement of specific high-school-level skills before admitting a student to college-level courses.

A high-school diploma is currently the ticket to college, but, for a variety of reasons, such a diploma guarantees very little regarding skill attainment. I am not suggesting slamming the open door or limiting access; I am suggesting that access to college does not imply open access to courses, that students can be admitted to developmental programs but be required to demonstrate specific competencies before being admitted to college-level classes.

Students will enroll in such programs when colleges require them to demonstrate the appropriate skills before admitting them to college-level courses. They may even start getting serious about preparing for college while still in high school.

THE NET EFFECT of unrestricted open access is minimal achievement at significant cost. When the economy was healthy, program effectiveness was not closely scrutinized. Under current economic conditions, we cannot afford to waste public resources by duplicating expenses in education without demonstrating specific achievement.

A real problem with implementing stiffer requirements is the risk to the colleges of loss in enrollment and, consequently, money, since most state institutions draw funds according to enrollment-based formulas. Indeed, many institutions that have initiated programs demanding student achievement and progress have suffered enrollment loss, leading some to feel that they can't afford to insist on quality because students will just go elsewhere for their "piece of paper" if teachers refuse to let them slide by.

Unfortunately, competition for a shrinking number of potential students seems to have precluded cooperation among institutions in addressing that most basic of issues, quality education. So the only solution that I can see is for the state boards, coordinating agencies, or legislatures—rather than the individual institutions—to require students to achieve at least a minimum level in high-school skills before being eligible for admission to college-level courses. Although I regret the encroachment of the state on institutional autonomy, I fear that the problem cannot or will not be addressed otherwise.

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ATTACHMENT B

BROOKINGS STUDIES COMMUNITY COLLEGES

The publication of a major new study on community college finance is worthy of notice. David W. Greneman and Susan C. Nelson have addressed a wide range of key fiscal and policy issues in Financing Community Colleges, just published by the influential Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. with funding assistance from the Carnegie Corporation and the Ford Foundation. With such a pedigree, and because of some striking findings, this study has been the subject of considerable discussion in higher education circles over the past several weeks. It is all the more significant because of the dearth of serious research on community college finance issues. A general theme of the Brookings study is that the blurred mission of community colleges makes it virtually impossible to craft a universally optimal design for financing these institutions. Another factor complicating finance issues is the degree of overlap between community colleges and other government funded schooling. Indeed, higher education and vocational education are among the few areas where government activities compete with each other for clients, but the types of institutions are not funded on a similar basis.

The Brookings economists have taken an unromantic look at community colleges, which are, by far, the fastest growing element of higher education in the country. A list of some of their observations and research findings suggest the range of issues raised in the study.

- "Two central tenets of the community college philosophy are that virtually no educational activity short of graduate education and advanced research should be off limits to community colleges and that students' tuition costs should be kept as close to zero as possible."

- The dominant administrative objective on most (community College) campuses seems to be to maximize enrollments (or the number of people involved in some college-related program). As open-door institutions with comprehensive missions, virtually no educational need within the community was off limits, which generated a great deal of goodwill for the colleges."

- "As community colleges have extended their activities and their target populations beyond the sphere of conventional higher education they have set themselves and questions related to their support apart from the mainstream."

- Funding decisions - by students and by taxpayers - cannot be made without regard to what the dollars are buying."

- "A preoccupation with the nontraditional aspects of community colleges can lead to a tautological definition of success as anything that happens, defining away the possibility of failure."

- "One of the interesting findings from the studies that followed an entering (community college) class for several years was that only a small percentage (including both part-time and full-time students) receives a two-year degree within two to five years - about 10 percent."

- "Community colleges are not junior colleges: few students graduate or transfer to a four-year college, and many apparent dropouts never intended to stay in school much longer than they did."

- "Studies that have attempted in a variety of ways to examine the relationship between spending and educational results fail to produce convincing evidence that more spending leads to high quality education. In part this reflects a poor understanding of the relationship between real resources (such as class size) and educational outcomes. This finding also could be attributed to the variety of technologies with which undergraduate education can be produced: large or small classes taught by a tenured faculty member, a junior professor, a part-time teacher, or a graduate student are obvious alternatives. While the costs of these options vary widely, educational value-added may not follow suit."

- "At least in the short run two-year academic degrees do not substantially improve a person's chances in the labor market."

- "Providing access to higher education for the disadvantaged and other nontraditional students is fundamental to the mission of community colleges. The evidence is clear that their student bodies are drawn heavily from populations that have historically been under-represented (in colleges and universities)."

- "Studies that have focused on some of the non-traditional (community colleges) clienteles consistently find that lower-income, lower-ability, and adult students are more sensitive to tuition (levels) than are traditional students."

- "Remedial courses should be offered at no direct cost to the student."

- "Since community college students are more likely to remain in the community in which they attend college than are students at senior institutions, the public benefits from their higher education are more concentrated in the local community. As a result, a case can be made on efficiency grounds for the local jurisdiction contributing some of the subsidy for academic programs at community colleges."

A number of the above observations merit consideration when viewing community colleges. The Brookings economists have brought into focus some important issues which policymakers with an interest in higher education would do well to give serious consideration.

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